

Message Text

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FOL NEW DELHI 9569 SENT ACTION SECSTATE JUNE 20, 1978 REPEATED
TO YOU QUOTE

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 9569

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ENRG, TECH , IN
SUBJECT: G.K. REDDY ON PRIME MINISTER DESAI'S NUCLEAR POLICY

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE FROM MADRAS
JUNE 20TH REPEATED TO YOU:

QUOTE:

MADRAS 1008

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ENRG, MNLFN TECH, IN
SUBJECT: G.K. REDDY ON PRIME MINISTER DESAI'S NUCLEAR POLICY

FOLLOWING IS FULL TEXT OF G.K. REDDY ARTICLE APPEARING IN
JUNE 20 HINDU TITTED: "OPPOSITION TO ASSAIL PM'S NUCLEAR
POLICY."

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PAGE 02 STATE 158652

BEGIN TEXT.

THE OPPOSITION PARTIES, NOTABLY THE CONGRESS (I) AND THE CPI,
INTEND TO RAISE A BIG OUTCRY DURING THE NEXT BTSSION OVER WHAT
THEY CONSIDER TO BE A UNILATERAL RENUNCIATION OF THE NUCLEAR
OPTION BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. MORARJI DESAI, WITHOUT A
PROPER MANDATE FROM PARLIAMENT.

THE CRITICS OF THE POLICY OF UNCONDITIONALLY ABJURING FURTHER TESTS, EVEN FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES, ARE NOT ADVOCATING THE RETENTION OF THE RIGHT FROM A CHAUVINISTIC ANGLE, WITH THE ULTIMATE OBJECT OF EXERCISING THE OPTION TO GO IN FOR A WEAPONS PROGRAMME AT A LATER STAGE, IF THE COUNTRY'S DEFENCE REQUIRED IT.

THEY ARE ONLY MAINTAINING THAT MR. ROLAI SHOULD HAVE DISPLAYED GREATER SOPHISTICATION IN USING THE OFFER OF UNILATERAL RENUNCIATION, IF HE WAS SO TOTALLY COMMITTED TO IT, AS AN ULTIMATE CONCESSION RATHER THAN AN OPENING GAMBIT FOR THE COMPLEX NEGOTIATIONS AHEAD WITH THE BIG POWERS ON NON-PROLIFERATION. THEY FEEL THAT BY FORECLOSING THE OPTION HE HAS UNNECESSARILY DENIED HIMSELF THE LEVERAGE HE COULD LEGITIMATELY EXERCISE IN COMPELLING THE NUCLEAR WEAPON STATES TO ADOPT A LESS DISCRIMINATORY ATTITUDE IN EVOLVING A MORE ACCEPTABLE CODE OF CONDUCT CAPABLE OF UNIVERSAL APPLICATION.

SCIENTISTS UPSET

THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY ALSO IS UPSET OVER THE INFUSION OF MORAL OVERTONES INTO WHAT ARE OTHERWISE HARD-HEADED NEGOTIATIONS FOR A BALANCE OF SACRIFICES BY BOTH THE NUCLEAR HAVES AND THE HAVE-NOTS TO MAKE THE WORLD A SAFER PLACE. THE PRIME MINISTER'S DECLARATION THAT INDIA WOULD RATHER PERISH THAN UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 158652

GO IN FOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS IS SEEN AS NO MORE THAN A RHETORICAL FLOURISH THAT HAS NO PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OR SANCTION BEHIND IT, SINCE MR. DESAI IS IN NO POSITION TO COMMIT HIS SUCCESSORS TO SUCH A POLICY OR SELF-ABNEGATION WITHOUT MATCHING RESTRAINTS BY OTHER NATIONS.

BUT IT IS APPREHENSIVE THAT IN THE MORE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT THE TENDENCY TO SEE AND INTERPRET INDIA'S NUCLEAR POLICY LARGELY IN MORAL TERMS THAT HAVE LITTLE RELEVANCE TO THE REALITIES OF LIFE MIGHT LEAD TO A PROGRESSIVE DOWN-GRADING OF THE PRIORITIES FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT. AS A COUNTRY WITH THE THIRD LARGEST SCIENTIFIC MANPOWER IN THE WORLD, IT CAN ILL-AFFORD TO LAG BEHIND IN THE RACE FOR THE TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES IN HARNESSING THE ATOM FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES.

IT IS NOT GENERALLY REALISED THAT THE TARDY ENTRY THAT INDIA HAS MADE INTO THAT NUCLEAR WORLD WAS NOT WITHOUT ITS MOMENTS OF GREAT FRUSTRATION. BUT THE INTREPID TEAM OF SCIENTISTS ENTRUSTED WITH THIS EXCITING ENDEAVOUR COULD PRESS FORWARD DESPITE INITIAL SET-BACKS BECAUSE OF THE STRONG BACKING THEY RECEIVED FROM THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT. IT IS NO LONGER A SECRET THAT TWO EARLIER ATTEMPTS TO EXPLODE A NUCLEAR DEVICE AT

THE SAME SITE FAILED BEFORE THE POKHRAN TEST WAS SUCCESSFULLY CARRIED OUT IN MAY, 1974, WITH AN IMPROVED MECHANISM. THE YIELD FROM THIS EXPLOSION, CONDUCTED WITH SEVERAL KILOGRAMS OF PLUTONIUM, WAS CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN NORMALLY EXPECTED IF EVERYTHING HAD GONE RIGHT.

SO THE TECHNICAL DATA THAT INDIA WAS ABLE TO OBTAIN FROM THE POKHARAN TEST WAS NOT MUCH THAT WOULD HAVE JUSTIFIED THE CONVENING OF AN INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR TO SHARE THE KNOWLEDGE WITH OTHER COUNTRIES INTERESTED IN IT. SO THE EARLIER IDEA OF SUCH A PUBLIC DISCUSSION ON THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF INDIA'S FIRST PEACEFUL NUCLEAR EXPLOSION HAD TO BE QUIETLY ABANDONED, PENDING FURTHER TESTS IN DUE COURSE. THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT HAS AUTHORISED THE ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION TO GO AHEAD WITH UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 158652

THIS PROGRAMME AND VARIOUS ALTERNATIVE SITES INCLUDING ONE IN THE ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS WERE UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION.

LEGITIMATE RIGHT

IT IS AN INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED FACT THAT NO COUNTRY HOWEVER ADVANCED IN ITS SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE CAN MASTER THE TECHNOLOGY OF HARNESSING THE ATOM WITHOUT CARRYING OUT A SERIES OF TESTS TO REGULATE THE YIELD, REFINE THE TRIGGERING MECHANISM, COPE WITH THE RADIO-ACTIVE FALL OUT AND DETERMINE ITS USES UNDER VARYING CONDITIONS. THIS CANNOT BE DONE WITHOUT CONDUCTING A SERIES OF AT LEAST FIVE OR SIX TESTS, FOR GOING THROUGH THE CYCLE OF EXPERIMENTATION, TO GATHER THE RELEVANT DATA AND MASTER THE SKILLS OF APPLICATION FOR DIFFERENT ECONOMIC PURPOSES.

IT IS NOT, THEREFORE, SURPRISING AT ALL THAT INDIA HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO GAIN MUCH ORIGINAL KNOWLEDGE FROM THE SUCCESSFUL POKHQRAN TEST AFTER THE TWO FALSE STARTS, NOR HAS IT MASTERED THE ART OF FISSION AND FUSION FROM THIS SINGLE EXPLOSION. THE COUNTRY'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME HAS SUFFERED A SETMBACK AS A RESULT OF THE CONCERTED EFFORTS OF THE BIG POWERS TO PREVENT IT FROM PROCEEDING WITH FURTHER TEST EXPLOSION. THE NEW POLICY OF UNILATERALLY ABJURING TESTS EVEN FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES HAS LEFT THE COUNTRY IN THE LURCH WITH NO HOPE AT ALL OF ACHIEVING ANY SELF-RELIANCE IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. THE POKHRAN EXPERIMENT, WHICH SHOULD HAVE PROVED TO BE A HISTORIC MILESTONE IN INDIA'S SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT, HAS THUS TURNED OUT TO BE THE STARTING POINT FOR THE SUBSEQUENT SLOW-DOWN OF THIS AMBIVIENT PROGRAMME.

IT IS THIS ASPECT OF MR. DESAI'S POLICY THAT THE OPPOSITION PARTIES ARE PLANNING TO HIGHLIGHT IN PARLIAMENT, WHEN THE SUBJECT COMES UP FOR DISCUSSION. THE INTENTION IS NOT TO QUESTION THE UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 STATE 158652

CONSTITUTIONAL PROPRIETY OR POLITICAL WISDOM OF HIS UNILATERAL
RENUNCIATION OF THE NUCLEAR OPTION, BUT FOCUS ATTENTION ON
THE CONSEQUENCES OF IT FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF INDIA'S
LEGITIMATE RIGHT TO MASTER THE SKILLS OF USING THE ATOM FOR
PEACEFUL PURPOSES WHICH CANNOT BE DONE WITHOUT FURTHER
TESTS.

END TEXT.

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